

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 272 270

PS 015 839

AUTHOR Walters, Karen
TITLE Latchkey Children and Programs.
PUB DATE [85]
NOTE 16p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *After School Programs; *Ancillary School Services;
*Childhood Needs; Elementary Education; Elementary
School Students; Family Life; Family Programs; Family
School Relationship; *Latchkey Children; *Program
Development; Public Policy; *School Community
Relationship

ABSTRACT

Various agencies are attempting to meet the needs of latchkey children through programs run by parent alliances, community organizations, social service agencies, youth groups, schools, businesses, churches, and private day care centers. Studies of latchkey children during the past 15 years have concentrated on measuring the effects of self-care on children's academic and social activities, on their fears, and on rates of accidents and child abuse. Perhaps the biggest obstacle to programs for these children is the lack of policies concerning child care for school-aged children at the federal and state levels, a void that leaves local schools uncertain about their potential role. Yet schools should have an important voice in the development of programs to respond to the problem of latchkey children. Appropriate staff selection is an important factor in the success of such programs. If after-school programs are geared toward academic achievement, staff selection would probably be based on educational achievement and proper credentials. If, on the other hand, developmental goals focus on an enrichment curriculum, experience and attitude might be a more meaningful standard for staff selection. After deciding what type of program is needed, the school and community should work together to develop a program tailored to local needs. (A sample of one school's after-school study program's grant application is included.) (HOD)

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LATCHKEY CHILDREN AND PROGRAMS

Karen Walters

Because of the social changes in the American family, there is an increase in the number of mothers working outside the home. This accounts for a large proportion of children needing before and after school child care.

These children are known as "latchkey" children. Latchkey child is defined as follows: a phrase coined during World War II to describe a child (between the ages of 5 and 13) who is regularly left without direct adult supervision before and after school. Latchkey is a term dating to the 19th century, when children on their own actually wore housekeys tied around their necks. While this shows that the situation of unattended children is not a new one, what is new are the huge and growing numbers of them in America (McCurdy, 1985).

1976 Census Bureau figures indicate that nearly two million, or 13% of the children between the ages of 7 and 13 whose mothers work outside the home, cared for themselves (Stroman, 1982). Levine (1982), citing figures published in 1978 and 1980, reported that 25% of the children between the ages of 6 and 13 cared for themselves. He warned, however, that these figures were not an accurate assessment of current needs because the figures do not include a large population of five-year olds who need after-kindergarten care.

The National PTA reports, the number of working mothers reached record levels in 1984. About six out of 10 mothers with children under 18 years of age were in the labor force in March 1984. The proportion of two-parent families with the wife working rose from about 40 percent in 1972, to 52 percent in 1983. Levin predicts, by 1990, 18 million children ages 6 through 13, and 1½ million five year olds will need after-school care.

This accounts for more than 5 million children facing an empty house with little or no adult supervision for long periods of time each day. Ms X laments, "My child

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is coming home from school, and I am not there to greet him, to hear about his day, to supervise his snacks, to make sure that he doesn't watch television all afternoon, to help him with homework and see that he gets outdoors for exercise. I am not at home because I am a working mother, and he is a latchkey child." (McNairy, 1984)

Most people agree there is a definite need for before and after school programs. McNairy reports, while the current and predicted needs seem staggering, the risks involved in leaving school-age children to care for themselves are frightening. Their feelings of loneliness, fearfulness, rejection, and alienation are accompanied by increased risks of accidents and sexual victimization, overexposure to television, exposure to drugs and alcohol, improper nutrition leading to obesity, peer pressure leading to vandalism and delinquency and academic failure. For many of them, the telephone has become their only link to security and the television their only friend (Wellborn, 1981).

Knowing that these children have special needs, let's focus on how these needs can best be met. Various agencies are attempting to meet the needs of these children in different ways. McCurdy indicates, currently, the needs of these children are being filled by a wide variety of programs run by parent alliances, community organizations, social service agencies, youth groups like the YMCA, schools, businesses, churches, private day-care centers and combinations of these.

The programs operate before and after school hours, and in most cases, parents pay fees that vary widely. The United Way reports, these programs represent a "diversity of choices", but this piecemeal approach, the lack of rational priority and inadequate funding, results in child care bordering on a crisis state in this country.

Public school systems across the country are beginning to consider their role in the solution of the latchkey problem. There are, however, pros and cons regarding the

the involvement of public schools in child care. School-based programs for latchkey children can help build parental support, attract students to or retain them in the public schools, put empty classrooms to use, and reduce the incidence of acts of school vandalism and juvenile delinquency committed by youngsters who "hang around" school after hours for want of something better to do (Strother, 1984).

McCurdy reflects, perhaps the biggest obstacle is the lack of policies concerning child care for school-aged children at the federal and state levels, a void that leaves local schools uncertain about their potential role. Some groups object strongly to school-provided childcare on grounds it constitutes an intrusion by government into family matters. Others voice concern over the possibility of higher taxes to pay for such public-run programs. School leaders also worry about possible ramifications of increased responsibilities on already burdened schools, how to finance these programs, the potential for siphoning money away from regular school operations, and undetermined legal liabilities.

Thomas Long and Lynette Long found that 30% to 35% of the children whom they interviewed in 1979 and 1980 in Washington, D.C., were caring for themselves before and after school. In a more recent study (1983) conducted for the Department of Family Resources in Montgomery County, Maryland, the Longs interviewed 2,180 families; they found that 21% of all households in their sample that included children under age 14 used selfcare as the primary form of nonparental child care.

Studies of latchkey children during the past 15 years have concentrated on measuring the effects of self-care on children's academic and social activities, on their fears, and on rates of accidents and child abuse. In 1970 Marilyn Woods studied 108 black fifth-graders from low-income families in Philadelphia whose mothers

worked outside the home. She found that the children who were left to care for themselves during nonschool hours had more academic and social problems than their peers who received adult supervision.

More recent research by the Longs found that children who cared for themselves experienced more fear, loneliness, and boredom than did children who were regularly supervised by adults.

The primary fear of these children was that someone would break into their homes while they were alone and hurt them, according to the Longs.

The telephone serves as a lifeline for many children who care for themselves during nonschool hours. One innovative program that makes use of this lifeline is Project PhoneFriend, a hot line established by a local branch of the American Association of University Women in Colleges, Pennsylvania. Through Project Phone-Friend, from 2:30p.m. to 6:00p.m. each weekday, adult volunteers dispense warm, Parental advice to children who are lonely, frightened, or just plain bored.

Some communities provide support to latchkey children in the form of training in coping skills that will improve their safety and well-being. Several service organizations have also stepped forward to help latchkey children, including Camp Fire(with "I Can Do", a program to teach self-reliance), the Boy Scouts(with "Prepared for Today"), the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse (with "I'm in Charge", a self-care course for parents and children).

The National PTA also recommends suggestions to parents on self-care for children at home alone. On the next page is a list of tips the PTA advocates the schools should distribute to all parents to help keep their children safe.

Self-care for children at home alone

Teach your children:

- To memorize their name and address, including city and state.
- To memorize their phone number, including area code.
- To use both pushbutton and dial telephones to make emergency, local and long distance calls and to reach the operator.
- To check in with you or a neighbor immediately after arriving home.
- To never go into your home if a door is ajar or a window is broken.
- How to work your home's door and window locks and lock them when they are at home alone.
- How to get out of the home quickly in case of fire.
- How to answer the doorbell and telephone when they're home alone.

■ Not to go into anyone else's home without your permission.

■ Never to go anywhere with another adult, even one who says you have sent him or her. Adopt a family code word to be used if you have to ask a third party to pick up your children.

■ To avoid walking or playing alone.

■ That a stranger is someone neither you nor they know well.

■ That if they feel they're being followed, either on foot or by a car, to run to the nearest public place, neighbor or "Safe House."

■ To tell you if anyone asks them to keep a secret, offers them gifts or money or asks to take their picture.

■ To always tell you if something happened while they were away from you that made them feel uncomfortable in any way.

■ To wear or carry their key out of sight.

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About three-fourths of the parents surveyed in a national study of child-care consumers in 1975 said that every community should have "supervised recreational programs" available to children during after-school hours.

But many administrators and teachers are confused about the limits of the schools responsibility to children and their parents. These educators cry about such issues as heavier professional workloads, tax increases to pay for the new school-based programs and the problems and conflicts that these new programs seem certain to generate (Strother, 1984).

Strother further reports, President Reagan signed into law a bill authorizing a two-year, \$24 million program of federal aid for school-based child-care. The new child-care block grant to the states was included in S. 2565, which extends the federal Head Start program for two years.

These block grants can be used to carry out the goals and services of the on-site child-care services to children. Hoffman(1972), stressed the need for goals that focus on the developmental needs of school-age children. Such programs should provide children with the following opportunities:

- to gain self-respect,
- to mature to the child's own capacity,
- to be an integral part of the community,
- to make choices of friends and activities,
- to have opportunities to pursue individual interests.

The establishment of program goals leads to decisions about the curriculum of such programs. Some view after-school care as an opportunity to improve the academic achievement of school-age children. For example, the Children's Centers in California have been charged by state education personnel to participate in the development of a competency-based academic program, and Atlanta's Expanded Day programs for kindergarten classrooms (Levin, 1978). Others, however, feel that after-school care should not be an extension of the school day, but that there should be qualitative differences in the two programs. The local personnel of the California Children's Centers see academically oriented programs as being too restrictive, and the Brookline, Mass. Extended Day programs have defined curriculum as nonacademic activities such as arts and crafts, cooking, music, and athletics.

A third approach to program curriculum is one in which academic skills are integrated with other activities. The curriculum in one New York City program, for example, includes experiential learning of skills, homework, sports, and ethnic activities (Galinsky, 1977).

McNairy explains, issues surrounding goals and curriculum of after-school programs also lead to questions related to staffing, such as salary, roles, role ambiguity, and hiring practices. The major issue is that of criteria for staff selection. Two

criteria predominate: 1) educational attainment accompanied by credentialing, and 2) experience in working with children.

The educational attainment criterion was described in both the California and Atlanta programs cited by Levin and in the New York City program cited by Galinsky and Hooks. In these three examples, teaching staff were divided into groups on the basis of educational attainment, with head teachers or teacher-administrators having the greatest amount of education. All three programs required a B.A. degree, but California programs require an additional fifth year of study in either early childhood education, elementary education, or multiple-subjects study. The Atlanta programs required staff to have had four years of teaching experience in addition to the degree. The second group of staff members in each of these programs, non-credentialed personnel, were required to have extensive educational background in either child development or early childhood education.

The second criterion for selection of staff for after-school care focuses on experience and attitude as more important than educational attainment. The Brookline programs, for example, maintain that:

a teaching degree is less important than experience working with children and a feeling by parents that they and their children would be comfortable with that person (Levin, 1978).

McNairy indicates, this criterion would allow noncredentialed persons such as recreation workers to be an integral part of the staff.

If programs are geared toward academic achievement, staff selection would probably be based on educational achievement and proper credentials. If, on the other hand, developmental goals led to an enrichment curriculum, experience and attitude might be the more meaningful standard. Thus, the interrelationships between and among these issues must be considered in the delivery of after-school care.

No one doubts that there are risks for latchkey children—particularly young children left to care for themselves in urban areas. According to Gargarino(1981) these risks include bad feelings (rejection, fear, loneliness), negative behaviors, (victimizing younger siblings, engaging in destructive behavior in and outside the home), developmental problems (poor school adjustment, negative feelings about self and parents), and mistreatment (accidents, sexual abuse). All of these risks are real threats for many youngsters.

An informed national attitude toward latchkey children must go beyond decrying these risks—a reaction that serves only to increase the guilt and worry that many working parents already feel. Each community must instead develop responses to the problem that are tailored to local needs. Schools should, and inevitably will, have an important voice in the development of programs to respond to this problem.

However, Strother states, local needs assessments and smallscale surveys may not accurately predict the number of children who will use proposed child-care programs, and they certainly cannot guarantee that such programs, once begun, will be fully used.

Campbell (1985) suggests that community agencies take the following approach in helping the schools start a schoolage child care program. Most successful programs have begun with a broad base of support from several community groups, often including school personnel. After deciding what type of program was needed, a meeting should be arranged with the school superintendent. The school then assisted with the development and administration of a questionnaire, helping decide the perceived community needs. From this groundwork, a viable proposal can be formulated.

I am including a copy of an Education Consolidation and Improvement Act, Chapter 2-FY85-Mini Grant Award. Brookwood School District 167 of Glenwood, Illinois applied

for and received this grant for after-school child care in 1984. What Strother describes is precisely what happened to the after-school program in Dist 167. The Program for After School Study (P.A.S.S.) would allow students to remain in school after dismissal for one hour, three days a week. These students would be able to do homework, receive tutorial help, do recreational reading, and special projects. The program started with 24 students. Although the program was in operation each day and a salaried teacher was hired, by the end of the school year only 6-8 students consistently attended. So, as the research shows there is a need for supervised child care but what is the best and most productive manner to provide it?

Levine(1979) contends:

Because the needs, resources and histories of communities in this country are so diverse, it would be unwise to assume categorically that the school (or any agency) is the best possible sponsor or provider of day care; it would equally be unwise for national policy to exclude schools as a potential provider of day care. The variety represented there suggests the need for an approach to national day care policy that values pluralism and local planning.

To solve the problem of latchkey children, a concerted effort by schools, churches, social agencies and especially families will be required. It is imperative that parents consider the safety and well-being of their children as paramount, lest latchkey children become more vulnerable and alienated than ever. The challenge is monumental, the stakes are high.

HICKORY BEND SCHOOL

September 20, 1984

TO: Kenneth A. Peterson
FROM: George Rau 
RE: PROJECT P.A.S.S.

The Program for After School Study (Project P.A.S.S.) at Hickory Bend School is off to a good beginning. After our district received this Chapter II mini-grant for Hickory Bend School, parents of Grades 2, 3 and 4 received a letter outlining our program with an opportunity to sign their child up to participate. Teachers in the district were informed of the project and the need to hire a teacher to supervise the program. The Hickory Bend Principal met with all three applicants together and Miss Diane Fleisher was chosen for the project. Mrs. Diana Fields and Mrs. Rita Pascale agreed to be available to substitute when needed.

The Program began on Monday, September 17th from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Seven students attended. They read, played quiet games and did homework. Dismissal was fine with all students being picked up. Parents have expressed appreciation for our project. We now have 14 students enrolled. First grade parents will have the opportunity for their students to join the project this week.

Attached is the list of students presently enrolled in Project P.A.S.S.

GR/aj
Encl.

REGIONAL SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
Lake County, Illinois
Room A904, County Building
Waukegan, IL 60085

Education Consolidation and Improvement Act, Chapter 2
FY85 - Mini Grant Award Application

Section I - EDUCATIONAL AGENCY APPLYING FOR GRANT

INSTRUCTIONS: Duplicate and submit one original and four (4) copies
of this project to the above address.

<u>BROOKWOOD</u>	<u>167</u>	<u>COOK</u>
SCHOOL DISTRICT TITLE	DISTRICT NO.	COUNTY
<u>201 Glenwood-Dyer Road, Glenwood 60425</u>		<u>312-758-5190</u>
ADDRESS (Street, City, Zip Code)		PHONE NO.
<u>Kenneth A. Peterson, Superintendent</u>		
NAME OF SUPERINTENDENT OR NONPUBLIC PRINCIPAL		

Person to whom correspondence should be directed in regard to this
application:

<u>KENNETH A. PETERSON</u>	<u>SUPERINTENDENT</u>	<u>312-756-0540</u>
NAME	POSITION	DAY PHONE NO.

PROJECT TITLE: (Please limit to 30 letters)

PROGRAM (FOR) AFTER SCHOOL STUDY

If the above information is for a nonpublic school, please complete
the following:

PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT IN WHICH YOUR FACILITY IS LOCATED

<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>PHONE NO.</u>
----------------	------------------

NAME OF PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned affirms that:

1. The information contained in this application is correct and complete and the agency cited below as well as the agency represented by the undersigned have been authorized to file this application.
2. The agency named below has been designated as the administrative and fiscal agent for this program and is authorize to receive and expend funds for the conduct of the project.

BROOKWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT #167

AGENCY NAME

201 Glenwood-Dyer Road	Glenwood	60425	Cook
STREET ADDRESS	CITY	ZIP	COUNTY

312-758-5190

TELEPHONE

Kenneth A. Peterson, Superintendent
NAME OF SUPERINTENDENT OF LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOL OR AUTHORIZED
REPRESENTATIVE OF INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING

DATE	ORIGINAL SIGNATURE OF SUPERINTENDENT OF LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOL OR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE OF INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING
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ASSURANCES

1. ECIA, Chapter 2 funds will be used to supplement and will in no case supplant funds from non-federal sources.
2. This project will be administered in conformity with the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and any regulations issued thereunder, as well as all other applicable federal and state legislation.
3. The design, planning and implementation of this project provides for systematic consultation with parents, teachers, administrators and other appropriate groups in accordance with ECIA, Chapter 2, Section 566.
4. This proposal is not a continuation of one funded under ECIA, Chapter 2 for FY84.

June 22, 1984

Kenneth A. Peterson, Superintendent

DATE

TYPE NAME OF SUPERINTENDENT OF LOCAL PUBLIC
SCHOOL OR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE FOR
INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING

SIGNATURE OF ABOVE NAMED PERSON

Section A - THESIS STATEMENT - Statement of Problem - Include Participants and Proposed Solution

58% of Hickory Bend Elementary School students are alone after school in a house or apartment where no adult family member is present.

Over 200 students Grades 1 through 4, come from a home situation where all of the adult members are working. This means that each day when school is out, a large number of students are unsupervised. Many parents cannot afford a sitter or day care center and do not have relatives close by.

Project P.A.S.S. would allow students to remain in school after dismissal, for one hour, three days a week, under the supervision of a teacher. These students would be able to do homework, receive tutorial help, do recreational type reading, or work on special projects.

The time that these children would be at home, alone, would be significantly reduced or eliminated. Parents concerns for these students would be lessened.

Section B - PROJECT OBJECTIVE(S)

1. By September 14, 1984, students would be identified by the Hickory Bend School principal as being eligible for Project P.A.S.S.
2. By September 14, 1984, a teacher would be assigned to work in Project P.A.S.S.
 - A. A back-up teacher would be designated in the event of illness by the project teacher.
3. By September 14, 1984, parents of Project P.A.S.S. students would have been contacted to sign permission slips for students to remain after school on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:45 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.
4. Project P.A.S.S. would begin September 17, 1984, and end June 4, 1985. In the event of school closing, which would result in the program being cancelled, additional days would be added until 96 sessions had been held.
5. Students must follow school rules to remain in the program. Parents of students who violate a school rule will be notified that their child is being dropped from the program.

Section C - PROJECT ACTIVITIES - Should Correspond with Each Activity

1. Project P.A.S.S. will be held in the Hickory Bend School Library.
2. Project P.A.S.S. will be held beginning September 17, 1984, every Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 3:45 to 4:45 p.m. that school is in session all day.
3. The Project P.A.S.S. teacher will be available to help students with homework or problems with school work.
4. The Project P.A.S.S. teacher will assist students with special projects.
5. The Project P.A.S.S. teacher will assist students with the selection of recreational reading material.
6. By June 4, 1985, students who remain in Project P.A.S.S. will be awarded a certificate for successful participation.

Section D - PROJECT EVALUATION - Should Have One for Each Objective and Activity

1. By September 14, 1984, parents would be required to give written permission for students to participate in P.A.S.S. The principal would keep these on file for the duration of the project.
2. By June 5, 1985, the teacher assigned to Project P.A.S.S. would make a written report evaluating project activities.
3. By June 5, 1985, parents of participating students would be surveyed to evaluate the project.
4. By July 1, 1985, the Hickory Bend Principal would submit a written evaluation of the project to the Superintendent for presentation to the Board of Education.
5. The number of students who receive certificates of successful participation will indicate the success of the project.

Section E - SUPPLEMENTARY NATURE - Provide Evidence that Effort is Supplementary in Nature

According to the Professional Negotiations Agreement between the Brookwood School District #167 Board of Education and the Glenwood Education Association "Extra Duty Positions and Extended Contracts":

1. Assigned extra duties shall be compensated at the rate of \$10.00 per hour.*
2. Teachers shall be compensated for supervising non-classroom activities beyond the regular school day.

The regular work day, adopted for teachers, is 7-1/4 hours from 8:30 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Project P.A.S.S. would be held from 3:45 to 4:45 p.m. each day. At the present time students are dismissed from school each day at 3:30 p.m. and leave the school. There is presently no study program for students after school.

*At the time of submission of this grant, negotiations were in progress between the Glenwood Education Association and the Board of Education which might increase this hourly rate.

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APPENDIX

- Hickory Bend School. "Program for After School Study (Project P.A.S.S.)". Education Consolidation and Improvement Act, Chapter 2, FY85-Mini Grant Award.